

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EURE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-07 /075 W
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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6657

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

DIA WASHDC

USDOCOSOUTH

USDOCOLANDSOUTHEAST

CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCUSAFE

COMSIXTHFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 9480

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU

SUBJECT: PRESS ATTENTION TO AEGEAN DISPUTE DROPS OFF

REF: ATHENS 9389 (NOTAL)

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1. THE GREEK-TURKISH CONFRONTATION IN THE AEGEAN VIRTUALLY
DISAPPEARED FROM THE GREEK PRESS SEPTEMBER 8. THIS WELCOME,
THOUGH UNDOUBTEDLY TEMPORARY, PHENOMENON FOLLOWS A MARKED
DECLINE IN PRESS ATTENTION TO THE SUBJECT OVER THE PAST FEW
DAYS, SEPTEMBER 5-7. IN FACT, THE PRESS HAS TREATED THE
LATEST FORAY OF THE SISMIK INTO THE CENTRAL AEGEAN WITH
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REMARKABLE RESTRAINT AND MODERATION.

2. PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS' REMARKS IN HIS SEPTEMBER 4 SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE THESSALONIKI FAIR CONCERNING RELATIONS WITH TURKEY (REFTEL) RECEIVED MAJOR COVERAGE. OTHERWISE, HOWEVER, DURING THIS PERIOD, PRESS TREATMENT OF THE SUBJECT EITHER STIRRED COALS (THE ATTEMPTS TO GET GREEK-TURKISH TALKS UNDERWAY; THE ZHIVKOV INITIATIVE; AND REPORTS OF THE GREEK COMBINED MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE AEGEAN) OR SOUGHT -- NOT TERRIBLY SUCCESSFULLY -- TO DEVELOP A STORY FROM FRAIL SOURCES. IN THIS LATTER CATEGORY, ON SEPTEMBER 7, TO VIMA (LIBERAL, OPPOSITION) AND ITS SISTER PAPER TA NEA (LEFTIST, OPPOSITION) PEDDLED A REPORT UNDER BANNER HEADLINES ("WAR IF THERE IS DRILLING") ATTRIBUTING TO STATE DEPARTMENT SOURCES THE OPINION THAT ANY ATTEMPT BY THE TURKS TO DRILL FOR OIL IN THE DISPUTED AREA WOULD LEAD TO A GREEK-TURKISH WAR. ALSO DISPLAYING JOURNALISTIC CREATIVITY WERE THE SEPTEMBER 7 ACROPOLIS AND ITS AFTERNOON SISTER APOGEVMATINI (BOTH PRO-GOVERNMENT) WHICH ALLEGED THAT "UN CIRCLES" ARE SEEKING A SOLUTION IN THE AEGEAN BASED UPON "DEMILITARIZATION", INVOLVING BOTH THE GREEK ISLANDS AND THE TURKISH AEGEAN ARMY.

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3. WE UNDERSTAND FROM A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT UNDER SECRETARY FOR PRESS AND INFORMATION LAMBRIAS CALLED IN THE POLITICAL EDITORS OF THE ATHENS DAILIES LAST WEEK AND APPEALED TO THEM TO DOWNPLAY THE "PROVOCATION" OF THE SISMIS'S CURRENT ITINERARY. LAMBRIAS APPARENTLY ARGUED THAT THIS PROVOCATION WAS CREATING A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THE GOG, INCLUDING SERIOUS RISKS OF MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH TURKEY. HE, THEREFORE, APPEALED TO THE POLITICAL EDITORS, ON GROUNDS OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST, TO COOPERATE IN THE EFFORT PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS WAS MAKING TO DEAL WITH THE THREAT WITH MODERATION AND RESTRAINT. THIS COULD VERY WELL ACCOUNT FOR THE WAY IN WHICH THE PRESS HAS BEEN HANDLING CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS WITH RESPECT TO THE AEGEAN DISPUTE.

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